

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**of**  
**Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.**

***Hearing on “No Time to Waste: Solutions for America’s Broken Recycling System”***

**June 30, 2022**

Today, the Committee is continuing its work on important environmental and climate issues by discussing legislative solutions to our nation’s broken recycling system. Every day, Americans are doing their part by sorting their waste, and tossing their used recyclable materials into the blue bin. But with a national recycling and composting rate of only 32 percent, it is clear that there are major gaps in our recycling infrastructure. We must address these gaps.

As Co-Chair of the House Recycling Caucus, this topic is especially important to me. Recycling is a critical tool in our toolbox to reduce pollution in our communities, boost our local economies, address climate change, and strengthen domestic supply chains. But the system is not working as well as it should. And the system itself was upended in 2018 when China banned most plastic waste and mixed paper material imports. This action prevented us from shipping recyclables overseas, and it required American communities to rely on other options. But this begs the question of where the recycled material goes. It should be recycled not landfilled or incinerated. I would like to know what’s being done to reduce the amount of waste that goes to landfills or is incinerated.

All this requires more funding, and as with many programs, our recycling system is severely underfunded. Municipalities across the nation, especially small and rural towns, struggle to manage their recycling programs, forcing scale-backs or complete cancellations of curbside collections.

This is bad news for both the recycling and the reuse side of the waste equation. Without adequate infrastructure to collect recyclable materials—like metal, plastic, paper, cardboard, and glass—our domestic manufacturers won’t be able to reuse these materials in new products and will continue to look overseas for input materials.

Fortunately, this Congress made a significant down payment in this area by passing the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law last November, which included \$350 million for recycling infrastructure, and education and outreach grants. This funding was a critical first step to addressing recycling infrastructure challenges and will improve recycling efforts across the nation.

But Congress’ work must not end there. Today, the Subcommittee will examine four bills which provide different solutions to our recycling challenges.

H.R. 1512, the CLEAN Future Act, which I introduced with Chairmen Tonko and Rush, is a comprehensive approach to combatting the climate crisis and includes a title on waste reduction. The CLEAN Future Act includes measures to reduce the generation of waste including a temporary pause on permitting of new or expanded plastic production facilities. It modernizes our nation's recycling system by establishing post-consumer recycled content standards, implementing a national bottle deposit program, and standardizing labeling and collection of recyclable goods. The CLEAN Future Act also establishes grant programs to invest in community-level zero-waste initiatives, reduce the amount of landfilled waste, and improve education and outreach. Many of these provisions align with objectives outlined in President Biden's National Recycling Strategy, which was released last November.

H.R. 2238, the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act, includes a variety of recycling and waste reduction policies to address the pollution from increased plastic production and disposal. This pollution is often concentrated in frontline communities, and I thank Representative Lowenthal for introducing this bill.

H.R. 8059, the bipartisan Recycling and Composting Accountability Act, is led by Representatives Neguse, Burchett, and Foster. This bill works to address data gaps on recycling and composting practices across the United States. This data will be critical to informing policy decisions to improve material recovery and boost circularity.

We will also discuss H.R. 8183, the Recycling Infrastructure and Accessibility Act – a bipartisan bill led by Ranking Member McKinley and Representative Sherrill. I thank Ranking Member McKinley for working across the aisle on this critical issue. This bill establishes a pilot program to increase access to recycling services in underserved communities struggling to keep up with increasing waste management demands.

All told, these bills present many options for addressing our recycling problems, including incentivizing reusable materials, reducing waste, and strengthening infrastructure. I look forward to the discussion today.

Thank you.